Abstract ID : 233

Title : Summer feeding habits of Steller sea lions (Eumetopias jubatus) in the Russian far-east

Category : Ecology

Student : Not Applicable

Preferred Format : Either Oral or Poster Presentation

Abstract : The summer diet of Steller sea lions (Eumetopias jubatus) was determined from scat collected during the summer months of 2000-2002 from 23 rookery and haul-out sites in the Kuril Islands, Kamchatka Peninsula, and the Okhostk Sea, Russia. Prey remains identified to at least family level from 1045 scats indicate that the top ten prey items across the entire collection range were Atka mackerel (Pleurogrammus monopterygius), walleye pollock (Theragra chalcogramma), sculpins (Cottidae), salmon (Onchorhynchus sp.), Pacific sandlance (Ammodytes hexapterus), cephalopods, Pacific herring (Clupea harengus), capelin (Mallotus villosus), Northern smoothtongue (Leuroglossus schmidti), and snailfish (Liparididae).

Principal Components and Cluster Analyses indicate regions of diet similarity. Since scat was collected only during May, June and July, these regional patterns of prey consumption could be the result of seasonal fish distribution patterns (salmon and herring in particular) rather than specific sea lion foraging strategies. Diets in the Kuril Islands, Kamchatka Peninsula (Russian mainland), and the Okhostk sea differed from one another, along with the rate of sea lion population change in these areas. Rookeries and haul-outs in close proximity to large land masses had, on average, higher diet diversity indices (more diet diversity) than off-shore haul-outs.